

27. Letter of Julius Posener to the architect Klaus Müller-Rehm, 17.08.1949, in Schirren and Claus 2002 (see fn. 3), 180.
28. Thomas Mann, *Ansprache im Goethejahr* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1949), 9–10.
29. Posener 1993 (see fn. 8), 280.
30. Cohn to Julius Posener, 03.09.48, in Schirren and Claus 2002 (see fn. 3), 173.
31. Ibidem. For Cohn see Ines Sonder, *Lotte Cohn. Baumeisterin des Landes Israel. Eine Biographie* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010).
32. Posener to Klaus Müller-Rehm, 01.08.1961, in Schirren and Claus 2002 (see fn. 3), 192. See also Wolfgang Benz, "Rückkehr auf Zeit. Erfahrungen deutsch-jüdischer Emigranten mit Einladungen in ihre ehemaligen Heimatstädte," in Claus-Dieter Krohn et al. (eds.), *Exil und Remigration* (München: Ed. Text und Kritik, 1991), 197–207.
33. For the architectural development and politics in Israel see Anna Minta, *Israel Bauen. Architektur, Städtebau und Denkmalpolitik nach der Staatsgründung 1948* (Berlin: Reimer, 2004); Anna Minta, "'Translated into Stone and Concrete.' Architecture and Building Policy as Instruments of State Construction and the Creation of National Identity in Israel after 1948," in exhibit-cat. *Munio Weinraub – Amos Gitai. Architecture and Film in Israel* (München: Edition Minerva, 2008), 51–71.
34. Thomas Mann cited in Jutta Held, "Das Exil der deutschen Künstler in den dreißiger und vierziger Jahren," in *Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch* 10 (1992), 196.

A NEW COLLABORATION BETWEEN JOSEP LUIS SERT AND JOAN MIRÓ ON THEIR RETURN TO SPAIN: FROM THE REPUBLIC PAVILION TO JOAN MIRÓ'S STUDIO

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This paper defends the following thesis: Although Josep Lluís Sert has been recognized as the undisputed leader of the first Modern Movement in Spain, he reached his culmination as an architect whereas he got rid of the commitment made with the avant-garde architecture. The Republican connotations of his first projects, used regularly as a political manifesto in Catalonia, lead him to exile. Sert offered his best works when he returned to build in Spain in the mid-1950s. These years his architecture turned up full-grown, exempt from political engagements, and emancipated from all the formal requirements of the orthodox Modern Movement. That was the time when he developed a personal Mediterranean architecture whose principles he had never ceased to be faithful to. Furthermore, he worked with domestic programs that allowed him to focus on his most beloved topic: the integration of the major arts. Indeed, Sert found the most motivating stimulus to design in the innermost alliance that brings together architecture and art. The study for his friend, the painter Joan Miró, was a built desire.

THE MID-1930s: ARCHITECTURE AND POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

In the years before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, the Government of the Second Spanish Republic had been identified with a new architecture in Catalonia, which sought to represent close ideals to European models of avant-garde. In this context, Sert began his professional life. Despite his aristocratic origins, he was always a convinced progressive who defended his ideas in favour of an advanced architecture, though he never got to take radical positions.

Relying on his proximity to Le Corbusier,¹ Sert persuaded the Catalan political leaders that Barcelona needed an urban planning that made it a pioneered as an urban laboratory: the first functional city in the world. His work was so effective that in April 1932 a significant representation of European Modern architects – Le Corbusier, Giedion, Gropius, Cornelis van Eesteren – went to Barcelona in order to prepare the IVth CIAM-Congress. Sert had won a strong respect as the founder of the Group of Catalan Technicians for a Progressive Contemporary Architecture (GATCPAC).² The association had an active space – the galleries Dalmau, which opened a day before the Republic was proclaimed – where exhibitions and conferences took place. Moreover, the Group published its own propaganda magazine: *Contemporary Activity* (AC).³ All these achievements were an insignia for a committed Government which used both Modern architecture aesthetics and Modern urbanism concepts to demonstrate its willingness to join the latest European trend. This was a way to win elections through artistic propaganda.⁴ Those facts contribute on Sert's credibility to convene the CIRPAC meeting in his city. Macià as President of the Republic, Aiguader as Mayor, and Domingo as Minister of Education were the most outstanding figures on the administrative organization in the adventure for creating a new social city which, at the end of 1931, began to take shape in the hands of the architects. Sert's and Torres Clavé's political affiliation to the Catalan Socialist Union (USC) and their connections to Esquerra Republicana of Catalonia (ESC) were crucial for the activity of the GATCPAC.⁵

However, Sert never assumed the ideas and the attitude of the Modern Movement in an automatic way, not even in those years of intense and close relationship with Le Corbusier in Paris. At the GATCPAC's first manifesto he pointed out the necessity of 'adapting modernity to our climatic conditions'. In fact, and probably because of Sert's influence, the magazine AC changed from a radical defense of the orthodox functional language present in the first numbers, to vindicate an architecture which paid attention to human necessities in the new society.

Sert wanted to get further away from the orthodox functionalism by publishing a lecture given at the School of Architecture of Barcelona at AC. It said: '(...) theories of Modern architecture led architects from some countries to create a "functional" architecture which, regardless of the spiritual needs of the individual, had as a result works that may not fulfill our aspirations which always go beyond material needs. (...) It does exist a "functional academicism" as dead, academic and dangerous as the academicism of this School. We have an example in the German *Siedlung*. These spiritually miserable constructions are an example, repeated often in history, of the danger of wrong interpretation theories'.⁶ Sert's frontal attack on the German *Siedlungen* – an exceptional sample of the heroic period of the Central European Modern Movement architecture – seems surprising. His harsh words can only be interpreted as a vindication of the intrinsic values of Mediterranean popular architecture, a topic already

published in the AC review since the first numbers. It is true that the reference to the Mediterranean anonymous architecture had been the starting point for the renewal of the language suggested by the avant-garde. And Sert always felt nearer to this approach than to the undeniable creed of prefabrication, modulation, mass-production and mechanized industrialization – those concepts were often misunderstood by the wish to represent European ideals. Even at the 'Casa Bloc' ('Bloc House') of the GATCPAC, possibly its most Corbusian project because of its architectural and urban design, the functional models were exquisitely qualified and enriched through the treatment of the scale, the open courtyards, and the materiality of the details.⁷ The Pavilion built for the exhibition of Paris in 1937 (Fig. 1) was a real manifesto which connoted clear anti-fascist resonances. At the beginning of the war, in 1936 and after a time in Brussels, Sert went to Paris after being proposed by James Miratvilles Director of the *Commissariat of the Catalanian Generalitat Propaganda* abroad: a recognition given by the Catalan Government because of his personal effort at the development of a State Architecture, backed by the GATCPAC. The scant means and limited financial resources were not an obstacle for an excellent work, where art and architecture merge as a result of the collaboration of architects (Sert and Lacasa)⁸ and artists (Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, Alexander Calder, Julio González and Alberto Sánchez).

Despite the rationality of the model, the iron laminated structure, the glass enclosure, the ramp to the first floor, or the orthodox rationalist language, some decisions such as the open and versatile courtyard covered by a folding awning, the scale treatment, the permeability of the ground floor or the natural participation of works of art in the definition of the building spaces, allow to identify how Sert might not resign himself assuming the established modern syntax in a mechanical way. The Republic Pavilion was the last work carried out with the label of the GATCPAC. Due to this project his license to build in Spain was revoked and he went into exile to the United States: a forced abandonment from his motherland where he would never return.⁹

THE MID-1950S: ARCHITECTURE AND THE SYNTHESIS OF MAJOR ARTS

The painter Joan Miró, who had participated in the Republic Pavilion with the mural '*El payés catalán en revolución*', also exiled in 1939 for political reasons to France, where he remained ten years. When 1949 Miró decided to return to his native country, Mallorca was his choice to settle down, an island he had loved from his childhood. Five years later, he decided to build a new studio and he asked for a design from his old friend, Josep Lluís Sert. Miró Studio's proposal (Fig. 2) gave Sert the opportunity to build again in Spain after more than a decade in the United States.¹⁰ Mallorca was the perfect place to satisfy his unrelenting desire to design Modern Mediterranean architecture and to explore some old thoughts about anonymous and vernacular models through the special use of material and light. An idea he had in his mind, as stated above, since he began to work as an architect. It does not seem casual that when Sert was commissioned with the project for Miró's new studio, he had been working for several years on a book about Antoni Gaudí, which showed him his own work from a new perspective¹¹. Through Gaudí, Sert returned to recognize the values of Mediterranean architecture, something really valuable for him: Architecture, more than based on rational or technical criteria, should be built with textures, colors, light and landscape.

At the same time, to work closely with a painter introduced, as it was mentioned at the beginning of this text, a new potential in his work: Architecture, painting and sculpture could work together for an indissoluble relationship. Sert's extension of Miró's Studio became a real manifesto, but this time the trinity of politics-art-architecture was converted into a tandem because of the disappearing of the propaganda connotations. Miró's Studio at Son Abrines (Mallorca, 1954) represented a deep rift between the Republican projects from the thirties built in Barcelona and Paris, and offered a new experimental approach which anticipated the concepts he would later freely develop at the Maeght Foundation at Saint-Paul de Vence (1964, France), his greatest masterpiece.

José Lluís Sert had shown a special sensitivity for the Visual Arts, a passion acquired through the figure of his uncle, the painter José Maria Sert i Badia. He used to claim to be 'so interested in painting and sculpture such as in architecture. Architecture is the work I have dedicated my life to, but for me the Visual Arts belong to the same family'.¹² In the 1930s, he had co-founded the *Amics de l'Art Nou-Amigos del Arte Nuevo* (ADLAN, 1932-36), a group with the aim of promoting avant-garde art. That was the time

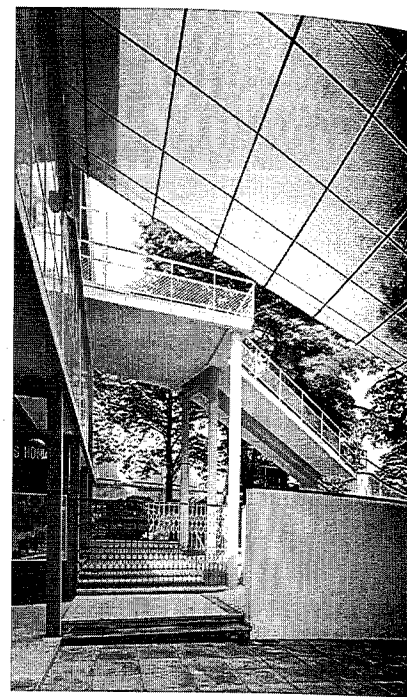


Figure 1. Josep Lluís Sert, Spanish Republic Pavilion (Paris, 1937). (source: VV.AA., *José Lluís Sert. Cicle de conferències* - Ibiza: Col·legi Oficial d'Arquitectes de les Illes Balears. Demarcació d'Eivissa i Formentera, 2007)

when he had begun to gestate the ideal that was shared by the most progressive Spanish intellectuals, in a search of a real synthesis between the new art and modern architecture¹³: an interest he had already had the opportunity to develop in the Republic Pavilion.

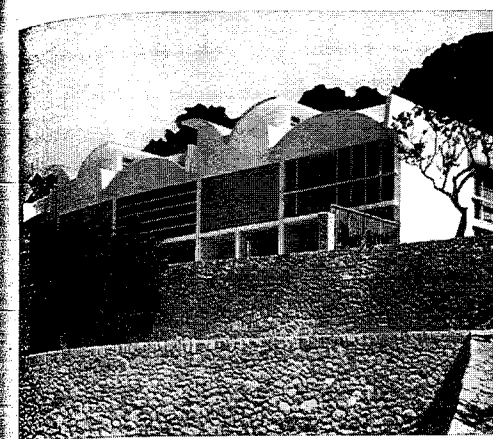


Figure 2. Josep Lluís Sert, Joan Miró's Studio (Mallorca, 1956). (source: Rafael Moneo: *Apuntes sobre 21 obras* - Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2010)

In addition, Sert had taken part on several episodes where he recorded his concern about this issue. In the manifesto "Nine points on Monumentality", drafted in 1943 together with Sigfried Giedion and Fernand Léger, they claimed the need to recover the monumental character of architecture through a lyrical encounter among city, building, mural elements, sculpture, and paintings¹⁴. Sert thought that art could bring the expressiveness absent in the sober language of orthodox functionalism. And the interdisciplinary work between architects and artists was the right way to achieve it. The topic was led, but tangentially, to the sixth CIAM of Bridgwater (1947), organized by himself together with Cornelis van Eesteren.¹⁵ Even though two years later, the topic was assumed as the main one at the next Congress held in Bergamo. Speeches and questionnaires began to realize that the collaboration between architects and artists could change the mode of producing creative work itself¹⁶. In fact, the projects with that shared ideal with his customers – their own homes in Long Island and Cambridge and spaces for the arts designed in collaboration with artists –, were the ones when he came to be the artist he never was and his architecture grew into a masterful level. Joan Miró's Studio offered the most suitable conditions

for Sert's understanding of the integration of arts. The abundant correspondence between Sert and Miró gives a close idea of the collaboration between architect and painter, now his client¹⁷. Both participated in the project from the beginning to the end. They formed a seamless team.

Sert and Miró knew each other since the 1930s. They had travelled together, shared conversations and interests, which settled a long and solid friendship. Sert knew Miró's work really deeply. He was able to understand how the artist wanted to observe his paintings and sculptures, what kind of light was needed to vitalize the reds, yellows or blues, what was the distance appropriated to observe correctly his murals, or what were the suitable atmosphere, textures and colors to not interfere with his creative process. In Sert's words: 'Joan Miró's world is a world of search and discovery of constants. (...) His acute eye places, as no one else can do it, different objects (of the most varied nature) in appropriate relationships, at the correct position and at the right distance one from the other. (...) This eases to relate objects constitutes an architectural quality in Miró, which makes him specially gifted to move naturally through large spaces with a special sense of scale'.¹⁸

Sert's initial idea was to build a large space, controlled from a longitudinal elevated corridor, that perfectly fitted Miró's needs for creation. At that moment, Miró was painting a mural for Cincinatti. Its size, 12 x 3 m, was a clue point for the studio's dimensions. A decision that amazed the painter: 'Being able to see the entire studio space and the canvases from the balcony strikes me as an excellent idea'.¹⁹ Miró was constantly worried about the climate and how it could affect his works and his own mood²⁰. Even the decisions for the interior finishes were chosen to comfort Miró's desires²¹. Miró's suggestions gave rise to a perfect rapport between one and the other. The clear spatial differentiation between the creation area and the storage space gives response to his gentle request to 'not see' another thing done while he was working²². The process of the Studio's design was conducted entirely by correspondence. The architect Enric Juncosa, settled in Mallorca, was in charge of the construction management.

The building fits the steep topography carved in terraces with two levels. One of them is extended to generate a *patio* for Miró's sculptures, which generously resolves the encounter of the building with the ground: the *patio* of the *masías*, convents, monasteries, palaces, present also in the anonymous architecture, is understood as a malleable element able to accommodate different scales and functions.²³ Sert uses the traditional Catalan vaults to build the roof. This solution allows him to create a system of skylights that also resolves the ventilation of the interior space. The articulation of the different vaults defines the building volume, the façades gain plasticity and depth. They vibrate under the Mediterranean light. Sert had just made a turning point from the projects of the 1930s. The Corbusian 'wise, correct and magnificent *game* of the *volumes under the light*' has now become a plastic exploration: he brings closer concrete, stone, ceramic or wood, developing an expressive and meticulous studio from these materials. The skylights textured with special treatments, the slabs formed by nerves united by ceiling blocks that turn into gaps for light and ventilation, or the lattice windows that keep out direct sunlight are some of the mechanisms that allow Sert to develop such a masterful approach.²⁴

Sert did not cling blindly to tradition. His references to vernacular typologies and models were neither mimetic nor proposed

a simple plastic or visual game. They were educated, plastic, sensitive, artistic.²⁵ He put into practice his reflections on how architecture could bring Mediterranean qualities to buildings, which should go beyond the mere commitment with rationalism language or functional demands. Thus, he developed at Miró's Studio the same solution for a ventilated ceiling as the one he built for the Republic Pavilion. However, functionality acquires new form and free expression through the essential elements of architecture – textures, materials, light or color – in Mallorca. Even the *patio*, which was already present at the Pavilion from 1937, changes in Son Abrines: it doubles (the interior work space can be considered as a second covered *patio*) and enriches. It exploits freely the relations between interior and exterior, a feature already hinted in Paris.

The Spanish architect Jaume Freixa remembers how 'Sert seems to generate the diffuse opinion that he builds museums like houses and houses like museums'.²⁶ Certainly, the domestic dimensions of his museums, such as the two ones built after Miro's Studio – the Maeght Foundation at Saint-Paul de Vence (1964, France) or the Miró Foundation at Barcelona (1975, Spain) – shows his natural way to integrate art into life: considering art as a part of life, he turns the museum into a personal home and each home into a unique museum.

Architecture and nature, architecture and tradition, architecture and technology, architecture and art. Sert finds his more brilliant way of expression when he works with Art and Architecture in a perfect tandem. A goal achieved after having released the duties of the Modern Movement's orthodox language and from political propaganda.

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Endnotes

1. In 1928 Sert, being still a student of architecture, went for the first time to work to Paris at Le Corbusier's office.
2. GATCPAC is the abbreviation for: *Grupo de Artistas y Técnicos Catalanes para el Progreso de la Arquitectura Contemporánea*. The Group was originally called *Grupo de Artistas y Técnicos Españoles para el Progreso de la Arquitectura Contemporánea* (GATEPAC), and it was founded in Zaragoza in 1930. There were three principal divisions: the North group, the East group, and the Central group. The East one principally supported by Catalan architects changed the letter E, for *Españoles*, to C, for *Catalanes*.
3. AC is the abbreviation for the magazine *Actividad Contemporánea*.
4. The Governor of Barcelona acquired an immediate commitment by approving the statutes of the GATCPAC. It proves the political support received by the East group.
5. Josep María Rovira, "Josep Lluís Sert: 1929-1953", in Josep María Rovira and Jaume Freixa, *Sert: de la ciutat funcional al disseny urbà* (Barcelona: UPC, Dédal Col·lecció, 2006), 4-27.
6. Josep Lluís Sert, AC 8, 39, in Carlos Sambricio, "GATEPAC vs GATECPAC", *El Gatepac y la revista A.C.* (Zaragoza: Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Aragón, 2005), 32-3. '(...) las teorías sobre la moderna arquitectura llevaron a los arquitectos de algunos países a la creación de una arquitectura "funcional" que, prescindiendo de las necesidades espirituales del individuo ha dado por resultado obras que no pueden satisfacer nuestras aspiraciones, que van siempre más allá de las necesidades materiales. (...) existe un "academicismo funcional" tan muerto, académico y tan peligroso como el academicismo de esta Escuela. Tenemos un ejemplo en las Siedlung alemanas. Estas construcciones espiritualmente miserables son un ejemplo más, repetido con frecuencia en la historia, del peligro de las teorías mal interpretadas.'
7. The Casa Bloc ('Bloc House') proposed the study of a minimum housing cell duplex and the possibility of adding several ones at the same block. The idea

was the architectural result of the new political orientation of the *Comisariado de la Casa Obrera* (CCO), whose executive committee members were Sert, Torres Clavé and Subirana. This technical office was responsible for solving matters related to construction.

8. Josep M. Rovira explains how Sert was the unique author of the project. Recalling the words of Lacasa: 'I was a builder of brick, Sert was an industrial builder; the pavilion should be done in four months, so it was obvious who had to create the final design'. In Rovira 2006 (see footnote 5), 17. '*Yo era un constructor de ladrillo, Sert era un constructor industrial; el pabellón tenía que montarse en cuatro meses, por tanto era obvio quién tenía que hacer el pabellón final*'.
9. Shortly after the Fascist victory at the Spanish Civil War, those responsible for the Republic Pavillion, Sert and Lacasa, were judged by civil responsibilities. They received a judgment that forbade them to return to Spain. Lacasa ended in Moscow and Sert settled in North America.
10. In 1953 Sert had been appointed Dean of the Graduate School of Design and Chairman of the Faculty of Architecture at Harvard University.
11. Josep Lluís Sert and James Jonson Sweeney: *Antoni Gaudí* (Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje Verlag, 1960).
12. Josep Lluís Sert, "Josep Lluís Sert. Conversaciones entre artistas y arquitectos", in Patricia Juncosa (ed.), *Josep Lluís Sert. Conversaciones y escritos. Lugares de encuentro para las artes* (Barcelona: GG, 2011), 7. '*Estoy tan interesado en la pintura y la escultura como en la arquitectura. La arquitectura es la labor a la que he dedicado mi vida, pero para mí las artes visuales pertenecen a la misma familia*'.
13. Among the members of the ADLAN group, there were the most advanced artists of Catalanian area of the time, such as Angel Ferrant, Eudald Serra or Ramón Marínello, who regularly organized meetings, exhibitions and conferences among painters, sculptors and art critics such as Picasso, Julio González, Joan Miró and Salvador Dalí, among others.
14. 'A monument being the integration of the work of the planner, architect, painter, sculptor, and landscapist demands close collaboration between all of them'. Josep Lluís Sert, Fernand Leger, Sigfried Giedion, "Nine pontis on monumentality", in Sigfried Giedion, *Architecture you and me* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 49.
15. 'Do you believe that cooperation between architect, sculptor and painter is real possible, in the present stage of development? And if so what new results might be achieved from this? How in your opinion could this practical cooperation be achieved? Should the architect, painter and sculptor cooperate from the very beginning, so as to strengthen the emotional and symbolic content of architecture'. Sigfried Giedion, *A Decade of new architecture* (Nendeln, Liechtenstein : Kraus Reprint, 1979), 32.
16. '*Si une communauté créatrice entre architecte, peintre et sculpteur est possible, de quelle manière pourrait être réglé le travail commun? [...] Un travail en communauté pourra-t-il se faire avant que la mentalité prépondérante de l'individu se transforme profondément [...]*'. Giedion 1958 (see footnote 15), 38.
17. Patricia Juncosa (ed.), *Miró Sert in their own words. Correspondencia 1937-1980* (Murcia: Cendeac, 2008).
18. Josep Lluís Sert, "Joan Miró. Pintura para grandes espacios (1961)", in Patricia Juncosa (ed.), *Josep Lluís Sert. Conversaciones y escritos. Lugares de encuentro para las artes* (Barcelona: GG, 2011), 35. '*El mundo de Joan Miró es un mundo de búsqueda y descubrimiento de constantes. (...) Su aguda mirada coloca, como nadie más puede hacerlo, diferentes objetos (de la más variada naturaliza) en sus relaciones adecuadas, en la posición y a la distancia correctas uno del otro. (...) Esta facilidad para relacionar constituye una cualidad, o aproximación, arquitectónica que hace que Miró esté especialmente hecho para moverse con facilidad por espacios amplios con una conciencia de su escala.*'
19. Joan Miró, "Letter to Josep Lluís Sert, 5 November 1954", in Juncosa 2008 (see footnote 17), 173.
20. 'I would suggest you to take into account the climate in Mallorca. It's hot in the summer, and the Studio has a large surface area, which is difficult to heat, particularly bearing in mind that I start working very early in the morning'. Joan Miró, "Letter to Josep Lluís Sert, 18 January 1954", in Juncosa 2008 (see footnote 17), 161.
21. 'Because of the large size of this surface, as well as the way I work, moving back and forth all the time, even on smaller-scale pieces, we probably should consider that if we cover the surface with tiles from *La Bisbla*, which are magnificent, we ought to install very efficient insulation underneath, or we would risk having cold feet, which is very unpleasant'. Joan Miró, "Letter to Josep Lluís Sert, 3 February 1955", in Juncosa 2008 (see footnote 17), 179.
22. 'Looking at the drawings, it wasn't entirely clear to me whether you can see inside the storeroom when you walk by. If so, and considering there will be paintings that I've set aside and would rather not look at for some time, and that there will also be unassembled stretchers and other materials in there, don't you think it would be better to place this space in such a way that I don't see the inside when I walk down to work, and focus my vision more on the large studio space?'. Joan Miró, "Letter to Josep Lluís Sert, 5 November 1954", in Juncosa 2008 (see footnote 17), 173.
23. Sert's ideas about the *patio*, can be found in: Xavier Costa, and Guido Hartray (eds.), "The Rebirth of the Patio", in Kund Bastlund *José Luis Sert* (Zurich: Artemis, 1967), 134-35.
24. Sert's turning point took place in parallel to Le Corbusier, but he demonstrated more interest to explore the possibilities of the technique and the standardized elements than the Swiss master.
25. About Sert's way of working see Mario Correa: "Josep Lluís Sert en América"; in VV.AA., *Josep Lluís Sert. Cicle de conferències* (Ibiza: Col·legi Oficial d'Arquitectes de les Illes Balears. Demarcació d'Eivissa i Formentera, 2007), 38-57.
26. Jaume Freixa, "El museo habitable"; in VV.AA. 2007 (see footnote 25), 11.